



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2005-103

Tuesday, August 2, 2005

CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Wisconsin gains \$17 million federal charter school grant

Grant is for first year of three-year application

MADISON—The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction received a \$17 million first-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support expansion and evaluation of charter schools throughout the state.

“The Department of Public Instruction’s application for federal charter schools funding received broad support from the Wisconsin educational community,” said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. “As an agency, we strive to work with school districts and chartering authorities, as well as other education partners, to create schools that benefit students through a strong academic program that will help us close the achievement gap.”

Wisconsin had 161 public charter schools operating in the 2004-05 school year, serving more than 21,500 students. The DPI anticipates another 29 charter schools will open in fall of the year. Wisconsin charter schools employ licensed teachers, students participate in statewide assessments, and the schools are accountable for meeting performance expectations in their charter contracts.

The grant will support the planning, design, and implementation of charter schools in areas of the state with a large proportion of schools that have been identified for improvement under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Additionally, it will support increased collaboration among educational partners to enhance the charter climate and support educational options through charter schools; assure quality educators and strong leadership in every charter school; increase capacity for opening charter schools that boost student achievement and comply with NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004; evaluate the effectiveness of charter schools and share those results; strengthen management and fiscal sustainability of the state’s charter schools; and increase parent, teacher, and community involvement in the development of charter schools through the dissemination of best practices that improve student achievement.

(more)

“We want charter schools tailored to each community’s unique circumstances,” Burmaster said. “Whether those needs are a special curriculum, teaching methodology, or classroom structure for a general school population, or work with at-risk students to provide the support that helps them succeed, Wisconsin charter schools use their autonomy to meet local needs and boost achievement for all students.”

Supporters of Wisconsin’s charter school grant cited funds for planning and start-up costs as important in the growth of the state’s charter schools. When Wisconsin enacted its initial charter legislation in 1993, just nine charter schools were formed. Last fall, the DPI received \$9.2 million in federal funding to operate the charter program which included providing grants for planning, first- and second-year operations, and dissemination projects by experienced charter schools. School district and chartering authority grants under the new grant award will be made after the start of the federal fiscal year (Oct. 1).

###